

A new industry

Melbourne's milk supply

Inspection of plant at Cave Hill

The happy career of the average milkman of the metropolis is nearly at an end, and it is not saying too much when we predict that in a few years the time-honored system of doling out the daily allowance from the ordinary pint measure will be practically unknown. Interchange of ideas and thought, based on sound practical experience, has proved an influence for good in connection with many of our industries, and it is pleasing to note that the most important one of dairying has not been overlooked, details having been carefully considered and formulated for supplying a want in the city that has been anxiously awaited for a long time. This was an absolutely pure supply of milk – a commodity indispensable for the physical betterment of mankind. Never has the need for a radical change been so apparent as during recent years, the mortality amongst children owing to impure milk being of an alarming character. Not only in regard to the young, however, has its effects been shown, eminent authorities having proved beyond all question of doubt that in many cases the fluid delivered from insanitary dairies had materially assisted in hastening death. In consequence of the great outcry against existing condition a number of gentlemen met together to devise some means of effecting a remedy, and after careful consideration decided to strike out on a stupendous undertaking of proving an article suitable to the tastes of the most capricious. Information was gathered from the most important centres of the civilised world, which showed that pasteurised milk contained in specially prepared bottles had met with overwhelming success, and without further delay it was decided to adopt this process.

Pasteurised or sterilised milk, it might be mentioned has been found to possess several advantages, the most important being the destruction of germs which might be present, and also lengthening the period of preservation. In view of these considerations those connected with the project felt confident that mothers especially would recognise the dangers to which their little ones were exposed from the use of raw milk in the summer time.

The course of action having been decided the formation of a company was effected about 15 months ago, styled "The Pure Milk and Dairy Co. Ltd.," and after a careful search for suitable premises those of Mr. David Mitchell, of Cave Hill, were secured in addition to the magnificent herd on the estate. Thus this gentleman was responsible for the whole supply for some time, but subsequently the co-operation of Mr. A.B. Taylor was accepted after his stock had been subjected to examination by the company's veterinary surgeon.

On Tuesday last an official inspection of the plant was arranged by the directors, who arrived by the midday train together with a number of gentlemen interested in the question and several members of the medical profession. A most sumptuous repast was provided at Buller's Crown Hotel and greatly appreciated after which the party proceeded to Cave Hill. Here they were met by Mr Chas. Mitchell and courteously shown over the splendid property, a feature of the inspection which evoked admiration being the cleanliness on every hand.

Meanwhile milking operations were carried on and about 5pm the party, which were increased by the arrival of a number of local and district residents, were given a practical demonstration of the process in the building formerly used as a butter

factory. Amongst the visitors we noticed Mr Levien, MLA, Mr D.E. Martin, Secretary for Agriculture, and Drs Brett, Backhouse, Officer, Owen, Jeffrey Wood, Cuscaden and Amess; the directors, Messrs Chas. Young, D. Whitley, Buchan and Agnew; Mr J. Savage, manager, Mr W.G. Cramer, secretary, and Messrs Kiddel, Towl, Joint, Syme, Nobel, Keenan, Hotson, Robinson, Knowles, J.C. Smith and H.S. Ruddock. Those from Lilydale included the Rev R.G. Burke, Crs (Dr) Syme, F. Lithgow and A.B. Taylor, Messrs R. Black and D. Kay, J.Ps., Sergeant Sharkie, and Messrs D. Mitchell, C. Mitchell, W. Towt, J.R. Macintyre, W.J. Hutton, E.A. Janson, R. Blair, J. Jordon and W. Black.

A short description of the method of treatment, which may be of interest our readers, is as follows:

In the first place the fluid is taken direct from the milking sheds and place in a reservoir upstairs, and after passing through a strainer, which prevents the passage of foreign matter, flows into the pasteuriser. This is in reality an ordinary Atkiesulanget separator but the cream is allowed to remain, and after being heated to a temperature of 158 degrees proceeds on its course to become cooled down. For this purpose it is conducted to what is known as the "first cooler," of circular form, the milk being aerated by taking a circuitous course over and under the corrugated discs – 14 in number. By means of this cooler, which is filled with water, and place in an elevated position on the ground floor, a reduction of temperature is made to 70 degrees, and continuing on to the second cooler is reduced to 35 degrees. Such a low temperature could only be attained by refrigeration ad this was conducted on a perpendicular framework of 18 pipes charged with chemically-treated brine. In this condition the milk is put into quart or pint bottles by means of a patent syphon, which allows for six being filled simultaneously. The plant which was in charge of Messrs H. Y Crowley, and G. Rogers, gave every satisfaction to those present, who after indulging in a glass of the milk and testifying to its excellence, dispersed.

At present time the company has an output of about 225 gallons per day, but it is expected that before long its operations will be considerably increased, not effort having been made to force the sale of the milk. This it was explained to our representative is on account of the desire of the directors to first educated the labour to a perfect standard and secure sufficient assistance from the district farmers to meet the steadily increasing demand.

During the afternoon refreshments were provided and the opportunity was taken of ascertaining the feeling entertained towards the industry.

Mr Young proposed the toast of "The Medical Profession," and in doing so referred to the objects of the company. He said that the primary consideration was to produce milk as pure as possible and place it in a thorough state before the consumer. (Her, hear.) Wherever supplied it had given unmixed satisfaction, and amongst their customers were a good number of the medical faculty, who gave it to their patients in addition to using it in their own homes. Although those present had not seen the plant actually in motion they had received an idea of the process, but this would be improved as far as possible to secure the end in view. He was particularly gratified to see so many of the medical profession present; there would have been more but for the fact that their patients could not get well in their absence. He asked them to couple with the toast the name of Dr Brett, ex-president of the Medical Association.

Dr Brett, after thanking the directors for their kind hospitality, congratulated them on what they had done and what they were going to do. As a medical man he could say that there was still room for improvement, but the system of treating the milk was far in advance of the ordinary practice of dairying in Victoria. (Hear, hear.) He found cleanliness all around him, but hoped that things had not been specially cleaned for the occasion. ("No, no") If the company could distribute pure milk it would not only receive congratulations but merit and get success. Melbourne badly required proper water and milk supplied and in connection with the latter one or two dairies had attempted to effect remedy, but if the company continued to carry on its good work it would greatly conserve the population of the city and suburbs. (Applause.) He concluded by asking them to drink success to the company.

The toast was enthusiastically honoured.

Mr Young briefly responded and called on Dr Amess, who said that having seen the milk in the metropolis he made enquiries as to the process of treatment and had it delivered to his residence. He also recommended it for many children, and one or two other medical gentlemen who devoted their time to the preservation of infant life, looked upon it as not only a boon to the young but to the community at large. (Applause.)

Dr Wood remarked that until recently the milk question had caused much trouble and doctors had to fall back on condensed milk. Under the company's system of pasteurisation, and with attention to a few details such as washing the bottles and milking, he was of opinion that the fluid would retain its freshness for 24 hours through the hottest summer.

Mr Young said it was unnecessary to tell them that if the company had been obliged to purchase machinery it would have cost thousands of pounds, but a good friend had been found in Mr Mitchell. (Hear, hear.) He very opportunely came on the scene and placed his refrigerating plant and premises at its disposal for experiments, consequently considerable expense and risk had been saved through his kindness and public spirit. Under such circumstances it was only right and proper that the warmest expression of gratitude should be tendered him, as no one else in the colony could have offered such facilities. (Cheers).

Mr Mitchell, who was received with applause, assured the gathering that nothing could have given him cause for gratification than to know that Mr Young and his friends were satisfied with what they had seen. The company deserved the greatest sympathy as it had experienced some uphill work. Mr Whitely had devoted a lot of time and attention to its affairs together with Mr Young and several other gentlemen, and they were deserving of praise for their efforts. Personally he was pleased at what he had done in the endeavour to carry the affair to a successful issue. (Hear, hear.)

He wished to mention that the veterinary surgeon, Mr H.S. Ruddock, had inspected all his herd; a few of the beasts had been turned out but the remainder were sound. (Applause.)

Mr Whitely wished it to be understood that the company was not composed of faddists as the system had been in use in the largest cities of Europe and America. For nine months they corresponded with all parts of the world before starting the industry, so that this would remove any idea that they were carrying out a fad. In New York one house turned out 10,000 bottles per day. (Applause.) the last occasion upon

which he visited England he found that the same mode of supply existed in Brighton and other cities, and he could say that that of Melbourne was one of the worst he had seen. (Hear, hear.) The two most essential things in a city were pure milk and water, and if the latter was attended with the same regard as they were paying to the former there would a saving of thousands of lives. In New York the death rate amongst children had gone down enormously since the milk supply has been altered, so that if the company succeeded in saving the lives of the 'youngsters' it would be doing a good thing. There was one thing required – the co-operation of producers – and he hoped that this would be extended so that consumers in Melbourne would be supplied with an article free from contamination, chemicals and disease. (Applause).

Mr A.B. Taylor eulogised the company on behalf of district producers for the excellent effort it had made to fill a long-felt want. All the previous speakers had spoken on the consumer's side, and he would be sorry to go away without expressing his appreciation as he was fully alive to the benefits conferred. The speaker thought it was a wretched state of affairs that half-a-dozen vendors should be selling milk in one street whereas under proper control once would suffice. He also pointed out the increased benefit farmers would derive by co-operating and paying proper attention to their herds.

Mr Ruddock verified Mr Mitchell's statement respecting the condition of the stock from which the milk was obtained. In the country there was only 5 per cent of tuberculosis whilst elsewhere it was 50 per cent. He could say that Mr Mitchell's Holsteins were the soundest in the colony. (Loud applause.)

In response to repeated calls Dr Officer stepped forward and said that he was pleased to be there that day. If those present could only attend at the Children's Hospital – the institution at which he practised – they would be able to observe the death rate owing to impure milk. He agreed that those engaged in the undertaking were public benefactors, and although not perfect the system was miles in advance of anything else. It was an industry that ought to receive the support of all medical men, and he had no doubt that suggestions for further improvement only needed expressing to be acted upon. He felt that there was a marvellous future in store for the company and that the output would be greatly increased. Milk was the pivot on which nature turned either downward or for successful growth, and he wished the management the greatest success, which it only deserved. (Applause).

Mr Agnew proposed the health of Mr Young, the toast being heartily drunk and acknowledged.

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